

The Invitation To Heaven.

Text: Matthew 11:25-30

Suggested Hymns:
301, 307, 308, 284, 396

- 1) The Worldly Wise Reject The Invitation To Heaven
- 2) Those Who Have A Humble And Contrite Heart
Accept The Invitation To Heaven

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 11:25-30, ²⁵ *At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. ²⁶ Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.*

²⁷ *All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*

²⁸ *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Every person is happy when he receives an invitation to the home of a true friend. It is considered an honour to be invited to a wedding ceremony and reception. It is a rare distinction to be invited to dine with the ruler of the land.

But the greatest distinction that can come to man is to receive the invitation to sit at the heavenly banquet table with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the saints and martyrs, the multitude of holy angels, and yes, with the eternal Triune God Himself.

All sane people would rather go to heaven than to hell, but they would like to do it on their own terms. Few people are willing to accept the Saviour's invitation to heaven and follow Him.

The Son of God spent His entire life on earth, inviting people to come to heaven. He travelled through the length and breadth of Palestine and part of the bordering countries, pleading with people to come to Him.

Sent by God the Father for this express purpose of filling heaven with guests, Jesus performed mighty works in every locality so that everyone would believe in Him and have eternal life.

But after travelling through the northern part of the land and finding people indifferent and hostile toward things spiritual and heavenly, Jesus upbraids the impenitent people and says in Matthew 11:21–24, ²¹ ***“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.*”**

²³ ***And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”***

Grieved over the many impenitent people who chose the road to hell in preference to the way to heaven, and at the same time rejoicing over those people in whose heart He found an abode, the Saviour speaks of His great invitation.

Jesus speaks to the Father in prayer. He issues the invitation in the most enticing terms to the humble and lowly. May God give us His Holy Spirit as we hear, *The Invitation to Heaven*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Worldly Wise Reject The Invitation To Heaven

Christ says, ***“I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. ²⁶ Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”***

Jesus thanks His heavenly Father for having hid from the wise and the prudent the invitation to heaven. Lest this be misunderstood, we must be reminded of the Scriptural doctrine that God most emphatically desires all people to be saved. We read in Ezekiel 33:11, ¹¹ ***Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord***

GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'

With an oath the Lord, who cannot lie, affirms that He wants all people saved. Why does His Son then thank Him for hiding these things from the wise and prudent? First, we must answer the question, "Who are the wise and prudent?" Then the former question will have answered itself.

The wise are those people who are wise in all things except spiritual matters. In the ways of the world they are well versed, being much wiser in their generation than the children of light. In science and learning they have advanced so far in their estimation that they consider the Gospel of Jesus Christ below their dignity. His invitation to heaven through faith alone is foolishness to them.

Professing themselves to be wise, they have become fools.¹ Jesus met many of them in Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida. Paul met them in Athens. — The prudent are those people who claim to be capable of judging correctly. They judge honour, favour, and pleasure as good; but affliction and sorrow as evil.

They judge it more important to possess a newly purchased piece of land, yokes of oxen, a newly acquired wife than to possess a place at the great feast where the heavenly Father is the Host.

In short, the wise and the prudent include all who are "***wise in their own conceits,***"² who place their own righteousness, their own merits, above the merits of Jesus who died on Calvary's cross for them.

Is it a wonder, then, that God offers to other people the cloak of Christ's righteousness, inasmuch as the wise and prudent insist they only need their own?

In the same breath the Saviour thanks the Father that He has revealed to the babes the way of entrance into heaven. Who are the babes? The babes are the sincerely penitent, who have despaired of their own wisdom, who know that in their own flesh nothing good dwells.³ They have no substitute righteousness to offer.

In childlike faith they accept the righteousness which Christ offers them. For this act the Saviour praises the heavenly Father: ²⁶ ***Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.*** Because the wise and the prudent continually reject the gracious invitation, it pleased the Father to reveal it to the babes.

In their worldly wisdom and prudence the wise can have no claim on the Father, because they reject His Son. First they must be humbled. They must become as the babes. But if they continue to resist, the Father reserves the right to withdraw His Spirit from them entirely, so that seeing they may see but not perceive and hearing they may hear but not understand.

What folly on the part of the wise of this world to exalt their own ideas above the knowledge and wisdom of God! Christ explicitly says in our text that *no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*

Oh, may we not be classed with the worldly wise and the prudent, with Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, with any who seek entrance to heaven by any other means than the one the Son has revealed!

Turning from those who consider the Son's invitation unworthy of being accepted, the Saviour issues the invitation anew, with special promises, to those who have a humble and contrite heart.

2. Those With A Humble And Contrite Heart Accept The Invitation To Heaven

²⁸ *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* There was never an invitation like it. Usually a host delights in surrounding himself with an array of distinguished guests. But here the rich, the high, the noble, the wise and prudent, the socially prominent are not the only ones addressed.

Those who labour and are heavy laden are also included. In each instance God looks upon the heart, not the outward man. Think of the galley slaves who were chained to their benches on the ancient ships. They moved their oars to the beat of the drum, were whipped when they slowed down from exhaustion, and cast overboard when the last ounce of their energy was expended.

Think of the soldiers who have been in the front line of wars for weeks without reinforcements or replacements. They are weary, trembling with exhaustion, yearning for the commander to say the word which will permit them to rest.

Now this invitation to heaven goes out to those who are even more weary than the over-fatigued soldier. It goes out to those who are carrying upon their own shoulders a burden which has been crushing them to the ground. It is a burden from which they will never escape unless a greater one comes and bears it for them. The burden is sin.

The Greater One is the Son of God, who bore the burden of all men's sins on the Cross. He calls out, ²⁸ *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* "Rest" means immediate peace for your troubled conscience. It is at peace with God the minute that you believe that Christ is "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*"⁴

"Rest" means eternal rest, heavenly rest. Sorrow and suffering will be a thing of the past. Fullness of joy and pleasures at God's right hand forevermore will replace them.

What an invitation! What great promises! Words of description can hardly do justice to it. ²⁸ *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden.*

William Dix wrote the hymn and F. K. Anthes has set it to music:⁵

'Come unto Me, ye weary,
And I will give you rest.'
O blessèd voice of Jesus,
Which comes to hearts oppressed.
It tells of benediction,
Of pardon, grace, and peace,
Of joy that has no ending,
Of love which cannot cease.

'Come unto Me, ye wand'ers,
And I will give you light.'
O loving voice of Jesus,
Which comes to cheer the night.
Our hearts were filled with sadness,
And we had lost our way;
But He has brought us gladness
And songs at break of day.

‘Come unto Me, ye fainting,
And I will give you life.’
O peaceful voice of Jesus,
Which comes to end our strife.
The foe is stern and eager,
The fight is fierce and long;
But Thou hast made us mighty
And stronger than the strong.

Our text concludes, ²⁹ *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰ *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

Take My yoke upon you. The Jews understood the term “yoke.” They had been under the Roman yoke for years. If Christ had said, “*I will cast off the Roman yoke and restore your former national glory,*” they would have flocked to Him.

If Christ had said, “*I will give you bread,*” they would have made Him king. But instead Jesus tells His invited ones to take His yoke upon them.

To the wise and prudent this likewise is an offence. Jesus invites His guests to learn from Him. From Jesus they can learn what the wise and prudent of this world can neither understand nor are able to teach — meekness and lowliness of heart.

To the wise of this world meekness and humility are qualities to be avoided, and pride and haughtiness are virtues. In Christ they find what the wise of the world will not find in time or in eternity — rest for their souls.

Lest anyone become terrified at the yoke, Jesus adds, “*My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*” Jesus asks His guests to take up His cross and follow Him bravely through trials and tribulations on the road which leads to eternal glory.

To the wise and prudent this is offensive, but to the babes it is a great joy. It is a marvellous exchange. That burden which had crushed their consciences and souls and would eventually have crushed them, body and soul, into eternal damnation, Christ has removed and taken upon Himself.

May we all gladly bear the easy yoke and the light burden which keeps us steadfastly on the path that leads to our eternal rest. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Rom. 1:22

² Job 37:24 ESV

³ Romans 7:18

⁴ John 1:29

⁵ Hymn 308